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ABSTRACT

This two-part publication attempts to evaluate junior high school education for young adolescents. It is a transcript of the National Public Radio presentation "Options in Education." The first part reports on a visit to a fairly new, upper middle class junior high school in Austin, Texas. In this transcript, the interviewer talks with the school principal, assistant prinicpals, students and teachers and records observations and dialogue from a band practice, a wood shop, a history class and a lunch period. The second part includes discussions about alternative ways to educate young adolescents; the needs of early adolescents; and middle schools and elementary schools going up through 8th grade. These discussions are held with school superintendents, educators and professionals specializing in the field of early adolescence. Descriptions of some different approaches and special school programs instituted by various public and private schools across the country are included. (RF)

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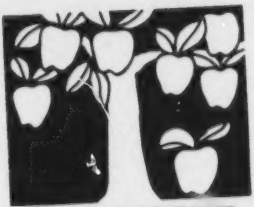

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PART I
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"JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS"

PART I

CHILD: A...

CHILD: B...

CHILD: C...

MAN: D...

WOMAN: H...

MAN: I...

MAN: J...

CHILD: K...

MAN: L...

TEENAGER: M...

WOMAN: N...

WOMAN: O...

WOMAN: P...

MERROW: O-I-O-N-S -- options -- OPTIONS IN EDUCATION. From the ABC's of pre-school to the alphabet soup of government programs, this is OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

* * *

A VISIT TO MURCHISON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MERROW: It's nearly 8:00 in the morning. I'm standing in front of Murchison Junior High School in Austin, Texas. It's in the northwest section of Austin, a wealthy community, and it's a fairly new junior high school; 763 students, about 80% white from upper-income homes, about 20% black from lower-income homes on the other side of Austin. They're bused in. This is John Merrow, and this week on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, we're going to spend our time inside a junior high school, trying to take you back to those days when you were 13, 14, or 15, in seventh or eighth grade. You may not have gone to as nice a junior high school as this one. Over to my left is a large...looks like an Olympic swimming pool; playing fields on two sides of the school, a lot of room to run around, good physical facilities. Inside the rectangular-shaped school is a large courtyard, open courtyard covered with lockers for all the kids. There's a full print shop, wood shop, industrial art shop. There's an orchestra band, stringed instruments, and the whole works. There's a choir that goes out on the road; that prides itself on its quality. Seven hundred and sixty-three students, 42 faculty members, Principal Joe Stepan. I'll be talking to many of those faculty members, to the principal, to the assistant principals, and to a lot of students. All in all, it's junior high school, perhaps the way it ought to be.

In a few minutes the buses will be arriving. That's one of the interesting aspects of Murchison Junior High School. The white kids, by and large, don't come on buses. Their mothers drive them to school in the new station wagon. The black kids come on the buses. Why junior high school? Well, some people say that's the crucial age; that's the most critical age for adolescents; that's the most critical age for educating young people; that's when they're the most vulnerable; that's when they're growing -- not the fastest, because in infancy they grow faster; but that's the second fastest growth period

in the life of a young person. That's the time when the kids are acutely self-conscious of their own physical changes, of their mental changes. They're growing faster -- kind of out of control. And that's the time that requires professional skill; that's the time that request the best that educators have to give. And yet, critics of junior high say that they're not really schools; they're just kind of "junior high schools." Nobody's really thought through what's supposed to happen.

Well, this week on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, we're going to try to find out what happens in this junior high school anyway. A next week, we'll take a look at arguments for changing the way we educate our young adolescents.

MORNING PA ANNOUNCEMENTS

MAN: Good morning. We need your attention for the morning announcements please.

STUDENT: All orchestra students go to the orchestra room for advisory this morning. For all you people out there who weren't sure what you're getting into for the '78 walkathon April 1st, let me tell you. It's a 20 kilometer route, free food and cokes along the way, doctors at every checkpoint in case of accidents that might happen while walking, a disco get-together at the end of the walk, and a great satisfaction knowing you did something so very important as to help in defeating birth defects. Come by the office and pick up your forms. Remember, it's for a good cause, so help out.

MAN: This completes our announcements. Thank you.

A VISIT WITH MURCHISON'S PRINCIPAL

MERROW: I'm in the main office, the administration office, right now, on my way in to talk to the principal. His name is Joe Stepan. Just a small office looking out over the playground; and here's Joe Stepan, the principal himself.

Now, you began as a teacher, and you were a counselor for 11 years, and you did some of that in high schools. Yet, you spend almost your entire professional career in junior high schools. Why that age group?

STEPAN: I guess it's because, to me, it was more satisfying and rewarding because I could see change.

MERROW: What do you mean by that?

STEPAN: A junior high student will come in, maybe the first year he's scared, will be frustrated, or come in crying, emotionally upset. And as a counselor, or as a counselling principal, or a teacher who responds as a counselor can listen to this student for a few minutes or talk with him. And in a matter of a few minutes, you can see the change; the burden is lifted off his shoulders. It was a good feeling for me to have them come in really down and emotionally upset, and then, after a few minutes talking, they go out and feel like they're happy and can lick the world.

MERROW: That's Joe Stepan. He's the principal here at Murchison Junior High School. And I'm on my way now out of his office, back into the main administration building, and then out into the hall. Get a chance to talk with some of the students here about school.

A STUDENT TALKS ABOUT HIS GRADES

MERROW: How well do you do in school?

STUDENT: Oh, I don't know. My dad got kind of mad at me cause I made a C in industrial arts. But, but, so did most other people. The highest grade was supposedly a B minus, but...

MERROW: How about your other grades?

STUDENT: They were A's and high B's, I guess.

MERROW: Your parents pay attention to your report card?

STUDENT: Yes, but my sister, she got straight A's, and she kind of teased me about my grades. And usually, I get straight A's, but I tell my parents it's because I'm adjusting to the new school (laughs) and that's why I get these grades.

MERROW: It sounds maybe as if your dad doesn't quite believe that.

STUDENT: No. He wanted to call my industrial arts teacher and talk to him about my grade. I said, "Dad, don't do that!" But, he says he's going to.

A LESSON IN CAUSE AND EFFECT

MERROW: Well, this is Mr. Perez' social studies class. It's usually a lot bigger than this. There are only...four, eight, ten kids in this class. It's not the full class, because a lot of the kids are out taking advanced placement science tests. It's an eighth grade class.

PEREZ: ...all right. So, we need cause and effect today. Now, you need to take out the notes, because that's what you're going to learn. What is cause; what is the effect. That's all we're going to be doing. Now, once you do this and you start working on your own projects, you have to figure it out. Everyone has to figure it out. Does your assignment...is it a cause, or is it an effect. And if it is a cause, for example, the Mormons went West; the Mormons left Indiana. Why?

STUDENT: Because they wanted to.

PEREZ: Because they wanted to. Did anybody push them out?

STUDENTS: No.

PEREZ: Well, that's what his job is to find out. If they did leave, then he has to figure out why, and what effect did that have on Manifest Destiny; what effect did that have on Dred Scott; what effect did that have on the Monroe Doctrine? Probably nothing. What effect did it have with Jackson? Did Jackson influence anybody in any way? What effect did that have on the Civil War? What did Henry Clay say about it? What does that have to do with the Constitution? You see, cause and effect. Did it cause something? Did it effect something else? Some of your issues are dead-end issues. They will stop right there. The Monroe Doctrine -- just a one-time shot, and there it is. That's all. Nothing happens. There it is. Now, all of a sudden, the year is 1803, and we're talking about what happens now. France -- remember, we're studying the French revolution. Who is in charge of France now?

STUDENT: Napoleon.

PEREZ: Napoleon. Now, Napoleon is trying to build his empire. He has given away this land. Remember? The French and Indian War. Right before the end, that he knew he was going to get beat, he gave half of the Louisiana Territory to the Spanish. So we have...we got this part up to the mountains; the Spanish get all this to the Rocky Mountains. Fair enough? Now, Napoleon says, "It's my turn now. I want all my land back." So here he gets all this land right here. So what do you do? Now, remember the movie that we saw the other day, "The Louisiana Purchase"? All right?

STUDENT: You buy it from him.

PEREZ: You buy it from him. Fair enough? Let's buy Louisiana. All right. What was the cause? What caused Jefferson to buy Louisiana?

STUDENT: Oh, New Orleans. They wanted to be able to export.

PEREZ: All right. We're after New Orleans. Ok? There it is. We

want to buy New Orelans, right? Why?

STUDENT: Because...for them to get the goods from out of the Mississippi River over there...

PEREZ: All right. It is a port. It's a very important port. Now, we offer to buy New Orelans. They give us...

STUDENT: The Louisiana...

PEREZ: The Louisiana Territory. How much?

STUDENT: Extra million dollars.

PEREZ: How many millions?

STUDENT: Fifteen.

PEREZ: Fifteen million. Two and a half pennies an acre. That means you could buy Murchison for....This is five acres. You could buy it...for 15 cents you could buy everything enclosed in the fence. Not a bad deal, right? Not a bad deal at all. Now, cause and effect. Now, let's find out. Robert over here was talking...

MERROW: Let's move on now from Mr. Perez' social studies class, cause and effect, and the Louisiana Purchase. Go on...continue our tour of Murchison's five acres.

A VISIT WITH TWO STUDENTS

STUDENT: My teacher, my social studies teacher is a lot different: different ideas and things. I was in his class, you know, the one you interviewed, except I wasn't there. I was taking that science placement test.

MERROW: He's a lively guy.

STUDENT: Yeah. Well, my other one was different. She just gave us all the facts. And then he says, "It's ok to know the facts, but you've got to know more than just the facts, more like the idea of it and all that stuff."

MERROW: Do you think of this school as being different from junior high schools around the country?

STUDENT: Well, I moved here in November from a different junior high in Arlington. And this is different. I mean, the way the building is built, and all that. But the subjects are all the same, yeah. But the teaching styles are different.

MERROW: How?

STUDENT: Well, like this is closer to some things, like the Alamo and junk like that.

* * *

MERROW: What are your favorite TV shows?

STUDENT: Oh, I don't know. (Laughs) I have no particular one that I like.

MERROW: You just turn the thing on and watch it?

STUDENT: Oh no. Not exactly anything. There are some shows I don't like. It's just if it's interesting. If it's not interesting, I turn it off, or something like that. Do my homework.

MERROW: Well, name your five favorite programs.

STUDENT: Oh, (laughs) I like "Happy Days." Well, usually Tuesday nights is when I watch a lot.

MERROW: What's on then?

STUDENT: Ummm, "Soap." (laughs) Some other shows. I can't think of them all.

LISTENING TO THE CHOIR

MERROW: I'm out in the hall now, in the upper level of Murchison Junior High School. In the background, we can hear the choir practicing, and they're going this afternoon to give a performance at the sixth grade. It's a treat for them. They get to go out on the road and do their thing; but it's also a pretty good strategy, because it introduces the sixth grade to the choir. That means next year, when the sixth graders are seventh grades, maybe they'll join the choir and the choir will stay good. We can listen in for a second.

* * *

MERROW: What we were listening to then was the choir singing with a record in the background, a little accompaniment. But this time, we're going to hear it without the record. That's the record. The choir director is just setting the beat. Now, here we go.

CHOIR: (Singing the theme from "Happy Days")

* * *

A STUDENT TALKS ABOUT BRACES AND BUBBLE GUM

MERROW: How long did you wear braces? I see you wear a retainer. How long did you wear braces?

STUDENT: Since about March of sixth grade. And I got my braces off on December 19th, last year.

MERROW: You remember the day?

STUDENT: Yeah.

MERROW: Kind of a Christmas Present?

STUDENT: Ah, yes, sort of. A birthday present, cause my birthday is two days later.

MERROW: How long do you have to wear that retainer?

STUDENT: This? Well, I...my orthodontist is in Dallas, and so I go back to him in early June, and then he just takes them away, and I don't have to wear them any more.

MERROW: What would he say if he knew that you were chewing bubble gum while you were wearing your retainer?

STUDENT: Ahhh, I don't know. I remember they gave me this little slip when I first got my braces that said not to chew gum, and not to eat pizza crust, or fritos, or stuff like that. But, but I did it anyway. But it didn't harm 'em. It didn't harm 'em.

MERROW: I notice a lot of kids here at Murchison wear braces.

STUDENT: Yeah. I guess most people our age do because their parents are concerned with the way they'll look when they grow up; and they want their kids to look right, and their teeth straight.

MERROW: Do you ever get teased because you wear braces, or so many kids

wear them it's no big deal?

STUDENT: Well, my sister used to tease me, and my dad said he didn't like paying for it because he should have got...I should have got straight teeth like his. He said I must have got it from my mom.

MERROW: When you say most kids do it, but not most kids in the country? Probably most kids here at Murchison.

STUDENT: Yeah, well most of 'em our age, cause, like they've lost all their baby teeth, and so these are going to be the teeth that they have the rest of their life, so they get 'em straightened out.

MERROW: Is that bubble gum?

STUDENT: Yeah. Bubble gum.

MERROW: Blow a bubble and pop it.

STUDENT: Ok. .....(pop!) I'll blow a bigger one.....If I had two pieces, I could blow a huge one. I can blow a bubble inside a bubble inside a bubble.

MERROW: Come on.

STUDENT: I can! I've done it before.

MERROW: Do it.

STUDENT: I'll try.....

MERROW: This doesn't come across as well on radio as it does in real. There's one. There's another bubble inside the bubble. (POP!)

STUDENT: Oh, popped it!

MERROW: The inside bubble popped. (POP!) (Laughs) and his mouth is covered with bubble gum.

STUDENT: I think it stuck to my retainer.

A VISIT TO THE FACULTY ROOM

MERROW: The faculty room is just inside the administrative offices, right near the principal's office, so I think I'll go in and see who's in there now. There are two teachers in here now. There's a coffee pot; there's a junk food machine of some kind, a refrigerator, a coke machine, a couple of bookshelves, tables, and two teachers who are here working on one thing or another. Maybe I can find out what they're doing.

That looks like a computer print out of...what is it, your attendance? Your attendance class?

TEACHER: That's the current seventh grade enrollment. I'm screening it for the top 10% to participate in a gifted program next year in environmental science.

MERROW: So you're a science teacher, and you're in charge of the gifted program for science?

TEACHER: For science, yes.

MERROW: One of the things I remember when I was teaching high school -- I taught high school English -- was that...a sense of isolation. There were two or three English teachers that I felt quite close to, and I felt they were...we were all sort of breaking new ground and really good, exciting teachers, and all

that sort of thing. But I also remember feeling that other teachers weren't as excited as I was. And I also remember feeling very isolated from them. I mean, it was a cellular kind of thing.

TEACHER: As a member of the faculty you mean?

MERROW: Yeah.

TEACHER: Oh, I think that's what I thrive on is a certain amount of anonymity. The fact that I can do some creative things. I can go home and put together a schematic for an approach to a subject in the course which doesn't require consultation with anyone. It's a way of drawing myself out. I don't feel isolated. In fact...unless I prefer to be, which is sometimes. Sometimes I do.

MERROW: I didn't find out your name What's your name?

TEACHER: Darren Dissett.

MERROW: Thanks very much.

TEACHER: Thank you.

MERROW: There are a couple of other teachers here, including one who I can tell by looking is grading papers. Since I used to teach English, that's near and dear to my heart. Tell me what you're doing?

TEACHER: I'm grading an adjective worksheet.

MERROW: What does that mean?

TEACHER: Well, we had to pick out the adjective descriptive, limiting and possessive modifiers.

MERROW: Ok, let's do some of the problems. Number one.

TEACHER: "She wore red shoes to the dance."

MERROW: Well, red is the adjective.

TEACHER: Right.

MERROW: What am I supposed to tell you? Whether that's descriptive or limiting or...?

TEACHER: Well, this was a very simple sheet. In the first section, we only picked out descriptive adjectives, and there was only one per sentence. Then the next section, you see, we did limiting in the same way.

MERROW: A limiting adjective means?

TEACHER: Well, in the past, they have been called determiners, also articles. But this particular textbook is a traditional book, and it goes back to adjectives or adjectives, and it does not talk about determiners or noun signals or articles.

MERROW: This limiting adjective means it somehow limits.

TEACHER: Right...

MERROW: Identifies something about the quantity...

TEACHER: Tells which one, or how many.

MERROW: What are these other papers you have here?

TEACHER: All right. This was using adjectives in an essay. The children pretended to be some common, every day object, and wrote an essay from the viewpoint of that object, using as many adjectives as they could, describing the item in great detail, very specifically, but never telling what it is. And the title is "What Am I?"

MERROW: And are you supposed to be able to tell?

TEACHER: Oh yes. It's not a riddle. It can be a riddle in a sense, but it should be very obvious what it is.

MERROW: Now, you've marked this paper; you've marked a couple of things with a familiar red pen, but there's not grade on it.

TEACHER: No, I'm not through.

MERROW: You will end up giving this young boy a grade?

TEACHER: Yes. This is a very nice essay, I think, very creative.

MERROW: Will you read it?

TEACHER: "I am sold in stores, and most everybody has what I am. I can be tall or short, and in many colors. I can also be wide or narrow. My friends can be dressy or casual, but I am sporty. One problem is that I get walked on, and sometimes I just wear out. I love tennis; and if it weren't for tennis, I just wouldn't be. I also love children, young children, and I love to run around together through muddy ponds and streets. I guess my best friend is the foot. The foot is one of man's most beautiful, ravishing, gorgeous parts of the body, and it is my duty to protect it. What am I?"

MERROW: That's terrific! A pair of sneakers?

TEACHER: Yes.

MERROW: That's really clever. Now, will that be an A?

TEACHER: That's an A plus.

MERROW: A long time ago, I took one course in teacher education when I was an undergraduate, and I only took one. And the guy teaching the course said: "What you should do if you want to observe kids, the best place to go observe is junior high school, because the kids are volatile. You can't predict what they'll do from one moment to the next. Boys are jumping all over the place; and the girls, the girls are growing. Half the girls will walk around looking down to see if they can see their breasts getting bigger; they're so self-conscious. Is that true? I mean, are the kids really so aware of themselves that they really aren't able to pay much attention to the academic side of things?

TEACHER: Well, they are very aware of the changes in their bodies and in their minds, and it does distract from the school work. There are a lot of things, to these children, that are more important than which is the adjective in a sentence.

MORE FROM THE STUDENTS

STUDENT: I wanted to get on a baseball team, but this weekend there was something going on at our church, and my parents wouldn't let me miss it. And so, I had to go to that, and I couldn't try out for baseball. And so now I can't be on the team, and that kind of made me mad; that I couldn't try out.

MERROW: Maybe you can get a later try out.

STUDENT: It was the last one. It was the makeup try outs, and they said

that...so now everybody's on their team and they have started practicing and everything. And I've played baseball since I was in second grade, and I wanted to play this year, but I just couldn't. Had that thing at our church.

LUNCHTIME

MERROW: I'm in the courtyard now at Murchison Junior High School, about to go into the cafeteria. The students here, like the students everywhere, say that the food is awful.

This is the cafeteria. It's also called the cafetorium cause it doubles as an auditorium. There's a stage over in one corner, and there's paintings on the walls. And there's a food line. I'm pretty close to the food line right now. This is different from a lot of cafeterias, a lot of food services, because the food is cooked here at the school. That means, probably, it's pretty good food, despite what all the students are going to say. They tell me that this is where they bring all the run over dead dogs in Austin, serve them up to students. I think I'll have a meal and find out.

There's no separate faculty dining room. There's just one table over in the corner where the faculty members eat. It's the usual pandemonium you find in school cafeterias. The black kids tend to eat together; the white kids tend to eat together. What's for lunch today?

WORKER: We only have spaghetti, and that's it right now. We'll have some french fries at 12:00.

MERROW: What was the choice at the beginning of the lunch hour?

WORKER: (Laughs) We had green beans, and squash, and cabbage, and that's it.

MERROW: But someone said you had hamburgers too?

WORKER: They're on the other line.

MERROW: Tell me what you mean "the other line."

WORKER: The other side over there. Those other counters over yonder.

MERROW: That's sort of a fast food line?

WORKER: Yes.

MERROW: How much is lunch going to cost me?

WORKER: Eighty cents.

MERROW: Is the food cooked here.

WORKER: Yes it is.

MERROW: The kids say the food is terrible, is it?

WORKER: Most of them do say that, and eat every day. We feel that we feed the majority.

MERROW: Everything is cooked here?

WORKER: Yes, we cook all our food here.

MERROW: None of the frozen meals that you stick in the oven?

WORKER: I don't understand.

MERROW: None of those, sort of, like TV dinners?

WORKER: No, no. We have no TV dinners here. We cook all of our lunch.

MERROW: Who decides on the menu?

WORKER: I get my menus from the central office.

MERROW: How many kids eat here every day?

WORKER: We do about 395.

MERROW: Out of 760?

WORKER: I don't know what the total enrollment is, but that's an average of what we do.

MERROW: Lunch is over, and it wasn't bad. Lunch of spaghetti with meat sauce, french fries, homemade bread, glass of iced tea, and a cut up orange. All finished now. It was pretty good. The lunch room is being cleaned up now, and I'm going to go back down into the main part of the junior high school, into the courtyard, and then over to class.

MORE FROM THE STUDENTS

MERROW: Everybody seems to give you a lot of grief about your mustache. How come?

STUDENT: They're jealous. They're all jealous.

MERROW: What grade are you in?

STUDENT: Eighth.

MERROW: Are you, are you trying to grow a mustache?

STUDENT: I don't know. Well, don't try and kiss it, will ya? No, I hope not.

MERROW: Tell me the truth now: do you shave it to make it grow back faster?

STUDENT: No. Think it's funny...

MERROW: Do kids razz each other about who's growing faster, and who's got mustaches, and so on?

STUDENT: No, not really.

MERROW: I remember wanting to have a mustache real badly.

STUDENT: No kidding!

STUDENT: See, if you shave it and wait for later, then it may grow real quick.

STUDENT: Ok, Stan, I suppose you know about that!

BACK WITH THE TEACHERS

MERROW: I'm back in the teachers' room at Murchison Junior High School, and there's a man sitting here who's got two books here: one is the Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, and that says he's probably a social studies teacher; but the other book is Modern School Mathematics, so that says he's a math teacher, and maybe he'll tell me which it is.

TEACHER I happen to be a math teacher.

MERROW: And you're reading...

TEACHER: I'm reading Miss Pitman for entertainment.

MERROW: How come you teach junior high school?

TEACHER: I like junior high school. I've been asked that question many times; many people ask me why I don't teach high school. And it's just this age group -- 11, 12, 13-year-olds: I much prefer them over senior high kids.

MERROW: You say "many people ask why aren't you teaching high school?" Implicit in that question is, somehow, that high school is really the top of the heap.

TEACHER: Well, that's, supposedly, that's where it's at. And I disagree. I really do. I think elementary school has a lot going for it; I think senior high's got a lot going for it. But it's just the age group of the kid; I like this age group!

MERROW: Aren't these kids tough to...I mean, they're exploding; they don't pay any attention to school work, do they? They're paying attention to their own growth.

TEACHER: Well, that's true. They...I think they have the greatest amount of problems. I think the senior highers are mature; they know where they're going; they're either extremely interested in school, or they're right at the verge of drop out. The elementary kid, on the other hand, is very immature, very much learning. But we have the puberty group, and they are the wild ones; they are a wild group. And, frankly, you know, I like to watch them grow up. I like to watch them mature. And the two years that we have 'em sees, I think, the greatest change in maturity.

MERROW: You say watch 'em, but you're involved.

TEACHER: Oh well, I'm involved. I'm involved in watching them grow; I'm involved in helping them grow and watching the final outcome. And I enjoy it. I get a kick. I see these kids come in as seventh graders, and they're still basically children; they're babies. And when we graduate them out of here as eighth graders, they're young adults; or at least we hope they are.

MERROW: I didn't find out your name.

TEACHER: My name is Glenn Pacy.

MERROW: And thanks very much.

TEACHER: Thank you.

INTERLUDE

STUDENT: Ok, I'll tell you about me and my boy friend. (Giggles)

MERROW: All right.

STUDENT: Ok. Yesterday he got mad because -- oh no -- he got mad. And then so, we're just sittin' on the bus...we're sittin' on a bus, and he said... he gave me my necklace, the dear. I said, "You ready for yours?" And he said, "Yes." So I snatched him up and I threw him out the windew, and I threw him myself. And that was all. And I just hopped up.

STUDENT: You did?

STUDENT: Uh huh.

MERROW: You think you'll get back together?

STUDENT: (Giggles) Yeah.

MERROW: How long you been going together?

STUDENT: A month. (Giggles) A month.

MERROW: Have you seen him today?

STUDENT: Yeah.

MERROW: Did he talk to you?

STUDENT: No. (Laughter) No.

MERROW: Did you talk to him?

STUDENT: No.

MERROW: What do you think's going to happen?

STUDENT: Oh oh. I gotta go, here comes Mr. Stewart. (Giggles)

MERROW: Those kids left because they saw David Stewart coming, and David is the assistant principal in charge of the eighth grade. He's really.. I guess, the disciplinarian. Is that right?

COMMENTS REGARDING MURCHISON DISCIPLINE

STEWART: I work with the discipline for all eight graders.

MERROW: So you're the tough guy?

STEWART: No. I don't like that label.

MERROW: Well, they scattered when they saw you coming.

STEWART: Well, they knew they were out of class.

MERROW: Well how...what kind of problems do you have in discipline here at Murchison?

STEWART: Well, we're really very fortunate. We have...both the number and the severity is small. And I attribute that, probably, to the interest of the parents, and the cooperativeness of the parents. And we really have very few major discipline problems.

MERROW: What's the worst problem you've had this year, say? This year's three-quarters over.

STEWART: Um huh. They would fall into the category of...the most severe problem is probably students fighting one with another.

MERROW: And what's the punishment in a case like that?

STEWART: Generally, the punishment is either in-school suspension, or suspension to the home.

MERROW: Let's talk about race, because about 18 or 20% of your student population is black and from a lower-income community, by and large; they're bused in. How well do black kids and white kids get along together?

STEWART: I think they get along very, very well. The problems that I

deal with seem to be just kids' problems. And very rarely is it a problem that I can attribute to a racial motive or incident, or something of that type.

MERROW: That's David Stewart, who's the assistant principal. He's in charge of the eighth grade. Last year he was in charge of the seventh grade. Next year, he'll go back to seventh grade, which means, really, that he stays with a class for two years until it goes on to high school. Makes a lot of sense. He can get to know them, and they can get to know him. And I suspect it makes things work a little better.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THREE MURCHISON BLACK STUDENTS

MERROW: Now, you three kids are bused to this school?

STUDENTS: Um huh. Yeah.

MERROW: Are you from East Austin?

STUDENTS: Yes.

MERROW: I'm a stranger, but East Austin, I guess, is where the...is the black community in Austin?

STUDENTS: Yeah.

MERROW: And are you seventh grade or eighth grade?

STUDENTS: Eighth.

MERROW: When does integration start? When do you start going to school with white kids? What grade?

STUDENT: Sixth.

MERROW: So this, for you, is the third year. What was the first year like?

STUDENT: It was pretty good.

STUDENT: Scarey.

MERROW: Was it?

STUDENT: Yeah.

MERROW: How come?

STUDENT: Because, you know, you didn't know too many people, and so... you didn't know the teachers, and you were used to East Austin, and, you know, you miss your bus, you wouldn't know where to go or nothing. So that's why it was so scarey.

MERROW: How does it work? How does it go? I mean, are you still scared? You've been here for a couple of years now?

STUDENT: No, I'm not scared no more.

MERROW: Would you...do you think the schools are better over here?

STUDENT: It's ok.

STUDENT: It's ok.

STUDENT: No.

MERROW: Would you rather be going to school back in East Austin?

STUDENT: Yes.

MERROW: How come?

STUDENT: I don't like to get up so early and go to school over here.

MERROW: How far do you have to ride the bus?

STUDENT: About three miles.

STUDENT: I don't know, but it's a long way.

MERROW: How long in time? How many minutes?

STUDENT: About 30, 40.

MERROW: Do you think the white kids ought to be bused into East Austin as well?

STUDENT: Yes.

MERROW: Why aren't they?

STUDENT: I don't know. They won't...I guess they're scared to go over there.

MERROW: I haven't been here long enough to know, but in many of the schools I've been in, where the school are integrated, the black kids stay together and the white kids stay together. Does that happen here?

STUDENT: Depends. (Laughs)

MERROW: Depends on what?

STUDENT: Where you are, and what kind of thing's you're doing -- I guess.

MERROW: Well, be specific.

STUDENT: Track, or field trips, or that sort of thing -- I guess.

MERROW: Now, the teachers are mostly white.

STUDENT: Yes.

MERROW: Do you find any problems? Do teachers treat you differently, expect different things from...

STUDENT: Yes. One, my first period class teacher in social studies. Well, since I'm the only black boy there, she doesn't consider me...well, she considers me sort of dumb. She doesn't give me...like, she asked the whole class a question: I raise my hand, and she doesn't ask me. Or if I ask a question, she'll be too pacific about it.

MERROW: Do you think she's just...

STUDENT: She's sort of prejudiced.

MERROW: You said yes also.

STUDENT: There's a few teachers like...they let white kids do something, and they won't let us do it.

MERROW: You mean the white kids get away with more things?

STUDENTS: Um hmh.

MERROW: Every integrated school I've been to, the white kids say, "All those black kids get away with murder." And the black kids say, "The white kids get away with murder."

STUDENT: That's not so. I think we get treated unfairly.

MERROW: Is this a tough school? Are you ever scared walking around? Do kids ever get beaten up, or anything like that?

STUDENT: This is civilized. It's ok.

MERROW: Well, I'll let you go into class, and thanks very much.

STUDENTS. Bye bye.

IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION ROOM

MERROW: It's very quiet in the halls now; all the kids are in class. And I'm on the way to the in-school suspension room. Now, the idea in in-school suspension is that the kids have been acting up, and it's really kind of a reward if you throw them out of school. So at least for the short term, kids are kept in the school, but pretty much in isolation. This is the room now, and the door is opened, so I guess I'll just walk right in. There is the in-school suspension teacher, who's Cynthia Austria, who, in fact, is a phys ed teacher by training, but is working here as the in-school suspension teacher. The in-school suspension room is...used to be the home ec room, and may still be the home ec room at times. And there are three young people here working quietly and pretty separate. And Cynthia Austria, maybe you could tell me about what you're trying to do here.

AUSTRIA: In-school suspension should mainly have to do with changing behavior. That's what they're in here first for. They also do their work so they don't fall behind. But the main thing is change of behavior so they can get back into class and study some more.

MERROW You've got three young people here now. What did they do?

AUSTRIA: Let's see.

MERROW: You don't have to use any names.

AUSTRIA: No. One has skipped class; another had a problem with the teacher -- disobeying.

MERROW: Wait a minute. A problem with the teacher disobeying. That means the kid disobeyed the teacher, not...

AUSTRIA: That's right. Disobeying the teacher, problems with who should have the authority. And the other one, making...having disturbances in the hall after repeatedly being told to be quiet.

MERROW: How long will they be here?

AUSTRIA: Ok. Most...two of them have been here...their first offense, so they'll be in here for one day to start out with. If they do well, they do their work, don't cause any problems and write out a contract, they'll be out of here within about one day, a day and a half.

MERROW: A contract? Explain what you mean.

AUSTRIA: A contract is their commitment to do better. They write down exactly in words what they've done, how they plan to change it, and how long they're going to keep that contract. They have their teacher sign it -- the

teacher they had a problem with -- the vice principal and a counselor.

MERROW: Now, that sounds like a fancy version of the old days where you used to go write on the black board, "I will not throw paper airplanes; I will not throw..." -- write it 50 times.

AUSTRIA: That's true, but it's a little bit deeper than that. If they're having problems with a certain person, a certain teacher, maybe personality problems, they're saying they're going to try to do better with that teacher.

MERROW: Now you told me that you do the counselling with the kids. But in fact, you're trained to be a phys ed teacher; you're not trained to do this.

AUSTRIA: No, that's right. But the problem with this job is there's no one really specifically trained for it. It should be a counselor position. Right now, it's such low pay, and most people use it as a stepping stone for another job, just to get into the system.

MERROW: And that's what you've done. You're leaving to take a full-time job as a phys ed teacher.

AUSTRIA: Right, right. I had some background in psychology, and things like that, so that's the main reason I got this job, rather than someone else. But I wasn't specifically trained for this.

MERROW: And you're leaving at the first opportunity.

AUSTRIA: That's right. Better pay. Pay for in-school suspension is about half of what a beginning teacher makes.

MERROW: Let's use numbers. What does a beginning teacher make?

AUSTRIA: In Austin School District, around $9,000.

MERROW: So this job really is an aide's job.

AUSTRIA: Yeah, and I'm not even sure if they get paid as much as an aide does, even though we're here all day, and doing a lot of counselling, a lot of work with the students, helping them with their school work too.

MERROW: So it may be important, but it doesn't show up on the pay scale?

AUSTRIA: That's right. Definitely.

MERROW: That's Cynthia Austria, who's the in-school suspension counselor and supervisor. And now, I think what I ought to do is walk over and talk to one or two of the kids who are currently suspended in school.

What are you in here for?

STUDENT: Talking back to the teacher.

MERROW: Tell me about the circumstances.

STUDENT: She was bugging me outside, so...

MERROW: She was bugging you? Maybe you were bugging here?

STUDENT: Naw. I didn't even know the teacher. She wrote me up, so I'm here.

MERROW: Have you been here before?

Student: Yeah, once.

Merrow: What were you in here for the first time?

Student: Talking back to the teacher.

Merrow: Same teacher?

Student: Uh-uh. Different.

Merrow: You're going through the school. Let's see, there are 34 teachers. You could spend a lot of time in here.

Student: Nah.

Merrow: When you work out your contract, what will that be like?

Student: I don't know. I haven't done no contract yet.

Merrow: Did you do one with the first teacher?

Student: Uh-uh.

Merrow: I thought the only way you could get out of here was by a contract.

Student: Well, I didn't get out by a contract. The principal taked me out.

Merrow: The first time you were here, you didn't have to have a contract to get out, but you did have punishment, I guess. What was the punishment?

Student: Two paddles.

Merrow: Who administers the paddle?

Student: It depends who put you in here. If the, Mr. Stewart puts you in here, he'll paddle you; if Miss Cash puts you in here, she'll paddle you.

Merrow: So it's one of the assistant principals. Who was it in your case?

Student: Miss Cash.

Merrow: How do they do it. Did she paddle you with her hand?

Student: No, a paddle, about a two-inch board thick paddle.

Merrow: It hurt?

Student: Nah, it didn't hurt me. I had some new jeans on and they was thick, so I didn't feel it.

Merrow: It's on the rear end.

Student: Yeah.

Merrow: Did she haul off and really swing?

Student: She swings. When she gives you a lick, she gives you a lick.

Merrow: Now, did you agree to that paddling, or did your parents know about it? How does that work.

Student: My parents knew. When you first come to school -- Murchison -- they have to fill out a form on corporal punishment. And my parents signed it, so they, naturally, they didn't have to call home.

MERROW: So your parents had agreed that if you got out of line, then the school authorities went through the procedures, that this is one of the ways they could punish you.

STUDENT: Yeah.

MERROW: Do you mind that? Do you mind being spanked?

STUDENT: Uh uh. Well, if I done something wrong, well, you gotta pay for it anyways, so I went on and took my licks.

MERROW: What's it like being in here?

STUDENT: Boring. Looking at the wall, go crazy in here.

MERROW: I think that's part of the idea, isn't it? To make you feel bored so you want to get back into school?

STUDENT: Yeah.

MERROW: And it apparently is working, huh?

STUDENT: Sort of. If you have something to do, it'll pass time away. Where if you've got nothing to do, you'd go crazy in here. There ain't nothin' to do in this thing. Sit and look at the walls.

MERROW: So that's the in-school suspension room. Three kids, a teacher who is not really trained to be working with kids in discipline problems -- counselling -- but a phys ed teacher who's leaving to get a job in phys ed.

MORE FROM THE STUDENTS

STUDENT: I love a lot of poetry, and I love music very, very much. I love music. My favorite authors: Laura Ingles Wilder. I liked her before anybody did, and that became real popular.

MERROW: That's a TV show now, too, isn't it?

STUDENT: I read all those books, and then the TV show came on. It just like freaked me out, you know. That's my show! (Laughs) But no one would believe me.

MERROW: Who else?

STUDENT: Oh, just any musician. I like lyrics, so I guess that's reading pretty well. Barry Manilow, he puts out real pretty lyrics. And Beethoven, I like Beethoven. I like Peter Frampton, Ted Nugent, and everything. Just every kind of music.

MERROW: Tell me about yourself. What do you think you might like to be?

STUDENT: Oh, I would like to be a musician, but I know that's not a very stable job, you know. Any interior decorating I could get into, something creative. I just like creative....So, I would like to do this; I'd like to go around and talk to everybody -- "Hi there!" -- that would be a fun job, I think. Do you enjoy it?

MERROW: What do you mean! You're not supposed to be interviewing me; I'm supposed to interview you.

STUDENT: Practicing. Can't help it. It's natural.

MERROW: That seems like an odd combination, though: a musician or an interior decorator. How come those two things?

STUDENT: Well, music's got all kinds of...you can do so many different things with music, you know. It's just so creative. I mean, anything! You can do anything with music! And interior decorating, the same thing, you know. I always wanted a house, a giant house, you know. And you could put, like, one room of dolls, and you know, decorate it with dolls; another room with ancient Egyptian...you know, anything. I just want to decorate like that.

BAND PRACTICE

MERROW: I'm in another wing of the school now, on the way to the band room, band practice. In fact, here's the room right now.

Kids sitting there with their instruments poised, but they're not playing yet. I think they're about to.

CONDUCTOR: Hi.

MERROW: Hi. May I listen in?

CONDUCTOR: Yes. Everybody, 26. (sound of string instruments) Come on. All rightey. One, two, ready, go. Da, da, da, da, da... (sound of violas playing)

Now, you be sure that you give all of it to me on that last note. And if I don't hear all of it, I'm going to hold that thing till I do, ok? Let me hear the last...well, let's do the whole thing again, from 26 on. Seconds and violas, you were terrific at letter B. I couldn't ask for any better. Ok, 26. One, two, ready, go. (sound of violas playing) I got somebody playing sharp on nearly everything. Don't know who it is. Sounds like right in there. Either Carol or...I don't know.

STUDENT: Sharp on the...

CONDUCTOR: On the G sharp? Uh huh. (sounds of violas practicing)

MERROW: Somebody's gotten out of tune.

CONDUCTOR: You know what I saw that girl right there doing? I couldn't tell, cause your hair was in your face. That's...now I know who it is. You know what she was doing? She was playing an open A.

STUDENTS: Huuuuuuuuuuuuuuuh.

CONDUCTOR: Isn't that awful. Nancy, look, we all agreed that in measure eight we would play fourth finger A. It's just as easy as open A. Right? If you get the G sharp in tune, why not play fourth finger A, instead of that awful open A. Now, let's try it again.

MERROW: Will I interrupt your concentration if I ask you if this is the band, or is it band class.

CONDUCTOR: This is orchestra, and this is only strings today.

MERROW: And are you getting ready for a competition? I thought you said something about that.

CONDUCTOR: Right. Thursday.

MERROW: What is that?

CONDUCTOR: That's University Interscholastic League contest. Orchestra contest.

MERROW: And tell me your name?

CONDUCTOR: Jerome Brilhart.

MERROW: Ok. Thank you.

CONDUCTOR: Um huh. All right, let'd do it again. Come one. No open A's on that thing. I mean, if it was hard, I could understand it, but it's not hard. Hey, Nancy, listen. Will you wear a barrette to contest, please? I'm afraid some of those judges are going to start giggling when they look up there and all they can see is hair playing the viola. (Laughter) All right, let's do it again. I'm not making fun of you Nancy. One, two, ready, go. (sound of violas playing)

Keep going a little bit more. Not bad, violas. Watch out! Pretty good. pretty good...

* * *

STUDENT: I'm in orchestra.

MERROW: Do you play the viola?

STUDENT: No, I play the cello.

MERROW: But you were practicing for a competition of some sort.

STUDENT: Yeah, it's tomorrow. Oh, we're playing three pieces, and we're trying to get a one, now, but I don't think we will; we'll probably get a two.

MERROW: What does that mean, a one or a two?

STUDENT: Ok, well, they rank you on from one to five, and one is excellent, and two is good, and three is so so. Five is the pits! (Laughs)

MERROW: How long have you played the cello?

STUDENT: Two and a half years.

MERROW: So what's the band class...that's the orchestra -- just the strings -- practicing, and practicing hard, getting ready for a competition.

AND NOW, WOOD SHOP

MERROW: I'm back out in the hall, and right across the hall is the shop. And here a smaller number of kids...it's the wood shop. A smaller number of kids not doing much at all, as a matter of fact. There's a band saw, and a joiner, and a table saw, and a couple of jigsaws.

Are you the teacher? I was just wondering where the teacher is? Is the period just about over.

TEACHER: Yeah. Also, we're short kids today because of the testing for science.

MERROW: Describe the equipment you have.

TEACHER: Well, we have all-power equipment -- lathes, table saw, planer, joiner, band saws, drill presses -- to facilitate making the projects and actual use experience with the equipment.

MERROW: It's all boys in the shop?

TEACHER: In this class, yes.

MERROW: But not in all your classes?

TEACHER: No.

MERROW: When I was in seventh grade and eighth grade, it was only boys who took wood shop.

TEACHER: That's right. It used to be. We're trying to still get the female back. They don't come into the non-traditional industrial arts areas; they're coming into our printing program, our photography. To some extent, maybe the power mechanics, and that kind of stuff.

MERROW: And what's your name?

TEACHER: I'm Randy Shure.

MERROW: Thanks a lot.

Wood shop. You can hear some of the equipment in the background; kids are sanding things. Some kids are clearly finished, because one guy's got a cutting board that he's just polishing up. Another guy's got... like a base for a lamp. The lamp I made in seventh grade still works; and, of course, my mother still uses it along with the lamps that all her other kids made. One of the hazards of being a mother, I guess.

LIFE AFTER SCHOOL, AND CONCLUSION

MERROW: In a minute or two, the bell's going to ring for the last period. You can hear what it sounds like now (fairly quiet), and you'll hear what it sounds like when the bell rings. (bell rings -- sounds of moving and shouting kids) And that means the day's almost over at Murchison Junior High School. The kids move into the last session of the day, which happens to be an assembly, and then they're on their way. The day's not over for junior high kids: probably an awful lot of activity begins when school's over -- athletics, either in school or out of school, just messing around, going over and shooting baskets some where, going over to a fast food joint -- the life of an adolescent. The life of a young teenager clearly does not end at 3:00 when school is out.

What are you going to do after school?

STUDENT: I'm going to go home and swim.

STUDENT: I'll probably go home and do my homework.

STUDENT: I'm going to go play nine holes of golf right after this, and have a cold Budweiser. (Laughs)

MERROW: Next week * * *

MERROW: Next week on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, other ways to educate young adolescents: the middle school, elementary schools that go up through the eighth grade, and a couple of different approaches. That's Part II next week.

* * *

MERROW: What are you going to do after school?

STUDENT: Go home.

STUDENT: Go home, sure.

STUDENT: I'm going to go home and do my homework.

STUDENT: Nothing.

MERROW: What are you going to do after school?

STUDENT: Go home.

STUDENT: I don't know.

* * *

MERROW: A transcript of this two part series on junior high schools costs $1.00. The two cassettes cost $10.00. You can get them by writing National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. Let me give you that information again: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. Ask for Programs 116 and 117, "Junior High Schools." And please, give us the call letters of your NPR station.

* * *

STUDENT: Play basketball.

STUDENT: Play baseball.

STUDENT: Go home!

STUDENT: Play football.

MERROW: What are you going to do after school?

STUDENT: I already told you -- baseball.

STUDENT: Baseball.

STUDENT: Baseball.

STUDENTS: Bye.

MERROW: Everybody say goodbye.

STUDENTS: One, two, three, GOODBYE!

* * *

MERROW: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of the Institute for Educational Leadership of The George Washington University, and National Public Radio. Principal support is provided by the National Institute of Education. Other funds come to us from Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is written and produced by John Merrow. The Associate Producer is Katharine Ferguson; the Assistant Producer, Natalie Iglitz. Technical assistance for this program by John Widoff, Andy Rosenberg, and Skip Pizzi.

Next week, we'll be back in Washington, D.C. From Murchison Junior High School in Austin, Texas. I'm John Merrow, and this is NPR -- National Public Radio.

* * *

MUSIC CREDIT: The theme from the television series "Happy Days," sung by the choir at Murchison Junior High School, Austin, Texas.

* * *

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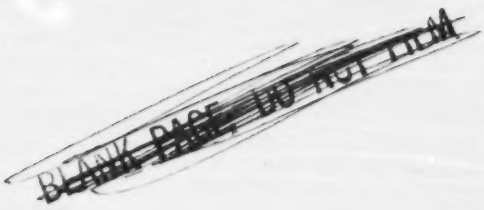

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PART II
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"JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS"

PART II

CHILD: A...

CHILD: B...

CHILD: C...

MAN: D...

WOMAN: H...

MAN: I...

MAN: J...

CHILD: K...

MAN: L...

TEENAGER: M...

WOMAN: N...

WOMAN: O...

WOMAN: P...

MERROW: T-I-O-N-S -- options -- OPTIONS IN EDUCATION. From the ABC's of pre-school to the alphabet soup of government programs, this is OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

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MONTAGE

MAN: I think, sometimes, we make too much out of this adolescent age group which seems to be the focal point of much attention -- how do we handle it. Educators have a way of overdoing things, and being too creative.

WOMAN: Most of the people who criticize the junior high do not work in junior high. Many, many parents are scared of junior high. Many teachers will refuse to teach at the junior high level because they're afraid of the 13, 14-year-old, because they don't know what to expect.

WOMAN: Good teachers can handle a child at even these difficult stages, and help him through this transition from childhood to adulthood. I'm not sure that any other superficial structuring is going to do it. I think it's merely a period that a child must go through.

WOMAN: Teachers in the junior high schools see students for only 45 or 48, or whatever, minutes a day. They see them in waves of time segments which are very artificial, unlike the elementary school teacher who sees the same group of students all day long. And to give of one's energy and one's intelligence, and one's compassion five, six times a day to these heterogenous groups of students who may have all very, very differing ways of relating is an absolutely, I think, cruel and inhuman thing to do to a teacher, to ask a teacher to be responsive to that.

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MERROW: Remember junior high school? You were 13, shorter by a foot than all the girls.

REINHARDT: It was the other way around for me, John.

MERROW: And self-conscious.

REINHARDT: And scared. Or confused, anyway, a lot of the time.

MERROW: Is it still that way?

REINHARDT: And does it have to be that way? Is there a better way for 12, 13 and 14-year-olds to get through school?

* * *

MERROW: How long did you wear braces? I see you wear a retainer. How long did you wear braces?

STUDENT: Since about March of sixth grade. And I got my braces off on December 19th, last year.

MERROW: I notice a lot of kids here at Murchison wear braces.

STUDENT: Yeah, I guess most people our age do, cause their parents are concerned with the way they'll look when they grow up, and they want their kids to look like...you know, their teeth straight.

MERROW: Do you ever get teased because you wear braces? Or do so many kids wear them that it's no big deal?

STUDENT: Ah, well, my sister used to tease me, and my dad said he didn't like paying for it, because he should have got...I should have got straight teeth like his. He said I must have got it from my mom.

* * *

MERROW: I'm John Merrow.

REINHARDT: I'm Barbara Reinhardt, and this week on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, the junior high school years.

MERROW: We're looking for a better way.

REINHARDT: And it's not going to be easy, because adults don't seem to agree on just who these kids are: that is, on what they're like and what they need.

MERROW: Are they self-centered, defensive, uncoordinated ugly ducklings?

REINHARDT: Maybe so. And why is it the school violence rate hits its peak in junior high?

MERROW: Or maybe they're really delicate fragile creatures in the process of becoming, of unfolding.

REINHARDT: We get the feeling it depends on whom you ask. Here's the view of Dr. Owen Kiernan, a former junior high school principal.

TWO VIEWS OF THE ADOLESCENT TEENAGER

KIERNAN: I think, probably, our junior high school principals are the most harassed of the entire administrative team, in the sense that watch a junior high school group dismiss at the end of the day, and the neighbors, with shrubs, as an example. Junior high youngsters have great difficulty in going by a shrub, when they're with a partner or some other associates, without pushing each other into the shrubs. Now, this damages the shrubs, and immediately the telephones jangle in the local junior high or senior high: "When are you going to insist that these young people walk in military fashion down the sidewalks, perhaps in single file." But we forget they're growing. And those growing pains during that early adolescent period are tremendous, and we've got to

recognize that they have outlets -- academic outlets, physical outlets in terms of games and physical education, team sports, not on a varsity level, but intramural. And I think if we understand them and give them these opportunities for a learning by doing, and recognize that it's the antsy period -- I like that description -- that they're going to grow up to be very mature and sophisticated individuals who'll make their contribution to this society of ours.

MERROW: But don't plant shrubs next to a junior high school.

KIERNAN: That's one of the rules. If I were to buy property or build next to a junior high school, I think I'd have to suggest that you make it as foolproof and as vandal proof as possible. I don't think there's any maliciousness in these youngsters. They're just bubbling over with energy. And when that happens, sometimes a shrub or a tree goes over. And I'm not suggesting chain link fences either. I think that gives it an institutional look that's unfortunate. But what I'm asking for is that people generally sympathize with the growing pains that the middle schooler or the junior high school youngster has.

REINHARDT: Dr. Owen Kiernan, a former junior high school principal. He's now head of the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

MERROW: On the other hand, Dr. Joan Lipsitz wouldn't put a fence around junior high kids.

LIPSITZ: Kids, at this age, are starting to know very much what their talents are, and they hunger for expression. When we talk about the arts and sciences at the university level, there are kids who know that they hunger for the arts; there are kids who know that they hunger for the sciences. And that hunger really comes out in the junior high years. And we don't do enough for that creative hunger. The kids starve. And they finally find other ways of feeding themselves. And the school becomes irrelevant to that hunger. That, to me, is the failure of the schools for this age group: that at the time when kids start knowing themselves most, for the first time in their lives -- they know themselves; they start looking at what society is; they start knowing what their talents are; they start really becoming interested in things, even if the interests don't last forever -- we deny it. We deny that growth.

BERNARD: And chart them into a certain regimented curriculum of science, math, reading, etc., not giving them anything that they...

LIPSITZ: Enough options, yes. Which is not to say that a kid who isn't interested in science should never take a science course. But it is to say that that person should have the option of taking more specialized courses in the area of interest.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz, Director of the Center for Early Adolescence. She talked with Barbara Bernard of station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

REINHARDT: We're using the term "junior high school," but, in fact, there are a couple of different ways to juggle grade levels for these kids.

MERROW: Junior high school usually means grades 7, 8 and 9, though sometimes it's only 7 and 8.

REINHARDT: Then there's middle school, which usually means grades 6, 7 and 8. And variations on that theme occur too when the fifth grade is included, as it sometimes is.

MERROW: And don't forget, kindergarten through 8: that is, the traditional elementary school with grades 7 and 8 added.

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REINHARDT: This week on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, we're going to take you around the country -- to Bloomington, Indiana, and Rochester, New York; to Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Toledo, Ohio, and Amherst, Massachusetts -- to find out what those communities do with their early adolescents.

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KIERNAN: Some of us think that youngsters during that period have two left feet, instead of one right foot and one left foot. They love to push; they have to move about; they cannot be incarcerated in the sense of lining them up custodially and placing them in a position. This is where they're growing. They're growing physically; they're growing emotionally; they're growing socially; they're maturing intellectually. They're beginning now to explore the different disciplines. Whereas in the elementary school, it's a kind of a sit and listen operation.

REINHARDT: Let's start with some history of junior high and middle schools. John talked with Owen Kiernan of the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

THE HISTORY OF JUNIOR HIGH AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

KIERNAN: Going back to the '20's, when the junior high schools became quite popular, the feeling was that the old 8-4 system -- that's an elementary school involving eight grades; this is before the days of common kindergartens; then it became a K-8 system; that an eight year elementary system and a four year senior high or secondary system was all that was needed. The feeling also was that the need for the pre- and the early adolescent period was such that you could not place these youngsters of that age in with older students. Presumably, they could pick up bad habits, and all the rest. So that the junior high became sort of an exploratory period, where these young people just growing -- sort of with two left feet as some administrators say -- would have a school of their own, and they would not be concerned with the youngest student on the elementary level, or the older student on the senior high school as their colleagues. The only problem was that the junior high schools then set out to emulate the senior high schools. And it didn't work as well as we anticipated it would.

When they began, however, to follow the "big brother," just as some of our state colleges began to follow the university brother, we noted that they were introducing varsity athletics, and all of the senior high school activities, and losing the exploratory value and the need incidentally for guidance counselors and teachers to stay with them.

MERROW: Now you're up to the 1950's now.

KIERNAN: Yes. I've moved on, incidentally, to demonstrate that by following the senior high school almost in toto, they lost the exploratory touch that they had hoped for in the 1920's and '30's. So the suggestion was made that the middle school might be a school that was for the "tweenager." We talk about teenagers, but these are the "tweenagers." They're 'tween the elementary and the senior high school; and that perhaps the middle school would be more appropriate for, team teaching as an example.

MERROW: Now, here the grades change, too. Instead of 7, 8, 9, it became generally 6, 7, 8.

KIERNAN: This is correct. And, occasionally, you'll find a middle school that dips as low as the fifth. We have a few in the country that go as high as the ninth, but some of these have been brought on by the problems of declining enrollments, the need to consolidate buildings. So you have some very odd combinations. But you're absolutely right; that the typical middle school would be 6, 7 and 8, and sometimes 5, 6, 7 and 8.

REINHARDT: Dr. Owen Kiernan of the National Association of Secondary School Principals in Reston, Virginia.

MERROW: Kiernan suggested that circumstances, like declining enrollment, do more to bring about change than ideas.

REINHARDT: That's what we found when we asked our reporters to tell us about schools in their communities.

MERROW: Cathy Lewis reports that Rochester, New York, was one of the first communities to establish junior high schools.

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

LEWIS: Separate schools for early adolescents were initially developed here to alleviate overcrowding caused by the influx of immigrants. By 1923, Rochester had established a junior high school in each quadrant of the city, and the plan was used as a model for junior high systems throughout the country.

Since then, Rochester has vacillated from having a separate network of junior highs, to abandoningsuch units altogether. Director of Instruction for the city school district, Dr. Ben Richardson, explains why.

RICHARDSON: Back in the early 1920's, Rochester created an extensive junior high program. During the world war period -- World War II period -- the junior high school program began to disappear, in the sense that the junior high schools were either placed in the junior-senior high schools, or kept in the elementary schools; and that was because of the declining numbers due to the war, etc., due to being drafted.

LEWIS: Declining enrollment was not the only reason for the 1934 decision to abandon junior highs as a separate unit. What had begun in the '20's as uncritical acceptance of these schools, turned into a period in which their validity was questioned. Citizens charged that junior high programs were not preparing children for high school; rather, just pushing them through. Others objected to the mingling of their children with foreigners outside of their neighborhoods. Junior high schools disappeared until the early '70's, when according to Dr. Richardson, the school board decided to again reorganize the system.

RICHARDSON: In 1971, Rochester revitalized the junior high school program, and set up separate junior high schools; and that was during their reorganization period; that was a recommendation of the administrative staff, the superintendent, and it was adopted by the board of education. However, approximately one year later, the board reversed itself, and decided that they would only create the two junior highs: one serving, as I said, the northern section of the city; the other serving the southwest. They felt this would better reflect the needs of the community, and as I said, the building needs of the areas they served.

LEWIS: The needs of the community might better be defined as opposition to a school integration plan. The creation of the separate junior high schools was directly linked to a plan which involved the busing of about 20,000 students. School Board member Frank Ciaccia.

CIACCIA: It appeared to the board in the district at that time that it would be easier to racially balance areas of the city by dividing up the junior high and the senior high components. And for that reason, for a more manageable distribution of children based on race, the junior and senior high split came about.

LEWIS: Ciaccia was elected to the School Board in 1972 on a campaign promise to reverse the reorganization. An advocate of neighborhood schools, he maintained that the separate junior highs violated that concept. School administrator Richardson says the development and decline of junior highs in the '70's can be paralleled to that in the '20's. Community pressure, changing enrollment patterns, and building needs all contributed to the formation of a network of junior-senior highs serving grades 7 through 12.

These combined schools have given Rochester area educators a chance to look at the more basic question: are junior highs really necessary? Dr. Richardson feels that they are. As case in point, he cites the fact that most 7 through 12 schools in the district have found the need to establish a cluster

system for the lower grades. A cluster is a family-like group of about 140 students who study with the same five teachers all year. The cluster occupies one small area in the school, and the students simply move within this unit. School Board member Frank Ciaccia also wants to keep seventh and eighth graders apart from the older students.

CIACCIA: There probably is a greater benefit to having a separate junior-senior high school. And I think...well, I think the benefit is shared greater by the senior high school students, because a senior high school is much more manageable and gives a much greater atmosphere conducive to an instructional program without the seventh and eighth graders being in that building. I think seventh and eighth graders should be with seventh and eighth graders.

LEWIS: Are you saying that the discipline problems on the seventh and eighth grade level are so great that if they're with high school students, it tends to disrupt the whole structure?

CIACCIA: Yeah. Unlike what most people feel that the older students influence the younger students, actually the problems...the type of behavior of junior high school students in a combined junior-senior high school setting, really, spreads to a very childish type of behavior upon the whole school, and the discipline problems and the suspension level, and some of the fights that take place which give a bad reputation to a high school, are actually being done by junior high school students. So, we really should have that separation.

LEWIS: Principal of East High School, Dr. Josephine Kehoe disagrees. She says that disruptions and suspensions are not necessarily linked to the early adolescent age group.

KEHOE: We found that we have, at seventh grade, we have quite a number of suspensions; and then again, we have suspensions at ninth grade. And what we know is that those are the two grade levels that we take in kids from other schools, so that we know there is an adjustment problem. By eighth grade, those seventh grade suspensions are down to almost none, and the same thing at tenth grade. At eighth and tenth grade, suspension rates are comparatively low. So the kids who get into trouble...you know, we're trying to see if there's a correlation between getting into trouble and being in a new building. We think there is.

LEWIS: East High School is the only 7 through 12 school in Rochester without a cluster system, and Dr. Kehoe says she has seen positive results with the combination junior-senior high.

KEHOE: I think it works well. There's a lot of parental concern at the beginning. I think that when kids come into the seventh grade for the first time, from the small schools -- and we draw from five fairly small schools -- there is some concern on the part of the parents: will the kids get lost; what's going to happen to them in the hall; they're really concerned about their safety. That's, really their first concern. We find that the kids adjust very well.

LEWIS: School Board member Frank Ciaccia says that he does not foresee any movement to again increase the number of separate junior high schools in the city. Ciaccia has proposed moving some seventh grades back into the elementary schools. But this plan is not so much a desire to reorganize the junior highs as it is designed to prevent the closing of several elementary schools suffering from an enrollment decline. Ciaccia expects to encounter little objection to this idea, or for that matter, to any reorganization of the junior high structure, as long as the plan does not involve the transportation of children outside their neighborhoods. For OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, this is Cathy Lewis in Rochester, New York.

REINHARDT: That Rochester School Board member wants to separate the seventh and eighth graders because, he says, they're the real trouble makers. The Superintendent of Schools in Austin, Texas, Dr. Jack Davidson, disagrees. It's exactly the other way around, he says. John asked if Austin put the ninth

grade in the high school to protect the seventh and eighth graders.

DO SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADERS NEED PROTECTION

DAVIDSON: Well, we made it for a number of reasons, but I think the primary reason was because most of our staff -- and I'm included -- believe that ninth grade students really work better with senior high school level than they do with junior high school. It has a lot to do with the rate of maturing and developing today. It has a lot to do with the kinds of functions that they like to participate in, and the kind of programs that are designed around students at about the age of the ninth grade.

MERROW: You said "rate of maturity." You mean ninth graders are more like 12th graders than they are like seventh graders?

DAVIDSON: Well, they're certainly more like 10th and 11th graders. There seems to be a pretty dramatic kind of change that occurs at about that period of time in most teenagers.

MERROW: You also said "functions." What do you mean?

DAVIDSON: Well, specifically, some of the programatic things they do. They're more in a social mixing stage at about the ninth grade than they are previously. The...well, their social maturity and their social awareness, I think, are both key factors.

MERROW: Is there any...do you also want to, in effect, protect the seventh and eighth graders from the ninth graders?

DAVIDSON: I think, in all honesty, to a certain extent yes. It became pretty evident, the longer we had ninth graders in with seventh and eighth, that really both the seventh and eighth graders were better off with the ninth grade in the high school.

MERROW: I remember my first day of seventh grade vividly, and a ninth grader coming up to me and saying, "Hey, kid." And I was just scared silly.

DAVIDSON: Well, sure. You know, there's such a physical difference, and in addition to that...well, physical and social. And in many ways, the emotions are quite different, too.

REINHARDT: Jack Davidson, Superintendent of Schools in Austin, Texas, where the ninth grade is part of the high school; and junior high school is only two years.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz, who used to teach in junior high school, would agree with Austin Superintendent Davidson about the emotional vulnerability of early adolescence. She talked with Barbara Bernhard about her teaching days.

LIPSITZ: If you have an expectation that this is a homogeneous group of students -- and I'm talking about...I'm not talking about IQ; I'm talking about the patterns of development. Young people are developing along many different lines: they're developing physically; they're developing emotionally, socially, intellectually. And all of this within one person that is not synchronized. So, a person is juggling many different ages. And you take that and think of all the combinations and permutations you could have with 25 or 30 students, all having four or five different ages that they're juggling, and it's a wildly variable group. In fact, it's the most variable group of students that any teacher can ever have in any part of schooling -- from K through medical school, or however high you want to go.. And so if you walk in with the expectation that you can teach one thing that you love to one group of students who appear to be a group, you are going to be defeated from the beginning, and that does defeat you. Because, by definition, a classroom is supposed to be a group; and you walk in, and it appears to be absolutely anarchic.

BERNHARD: It's chaotic.

LIPSITZ: Absolutely chaotic. What happened was, that by Thanksgiving, I decided that I was either going to resign, or something radical was going to have to happen. And given that time--and teachers lack time; it's not a humane situation for teachers--a given time over Thanksgiving, I started realizing what would appear to be fundamental, which is that the kids were not going to change; that their growth and development is inexorable. And that if anything was going to change, it was going to have to be the institution. I obviously couldn't change the whole school system. The question was what could be changed within the classroom. And I started looking at what appeared to be out of synch with the developmental characteristics of the age group.

Now, I can talk about this now in a more articulate way than I felt it then. It was a desperate move at the time. But one of the very first things that you notice, if you walk into any junior high school classroom, is that the kids cannot sit still. And if you walk into a classroom with, let's say, early childhood, you know, toddlers, or four-year-olds, five-year-olds, of course, you notice that they are not sitting still. And I started thinking of my adolescents as being toddlers, in the sense that they are very inquisitive; they are very creative; they are incorrigible in the sense that when they need to do something, it's an almost limitless drive. Their energy can be exhausting. So, why is it that we would consider a teacher who made toddlers sit still an abusive teacher; but we consider adolescents who can't sit still, abusive of us. So that was one of the first things. What would happen if I took into account the adolescent growth spurt, and said, "These kids can't sit still; therefore, they will not have to sit."

The second that kids can get up and walk around a classroom, all of the control structures change, all the techniques for teaching change, all the curricula materials have to change. It's a radical...that one change is radical, and it's the one thing....Again, the teachers respond to a great deal, because it appears to whimsical. If you say take the growth characteristic that appears to be least applicable to the school situation, it would seem to be adolescent growth spurt. And then, if you say, if you took that into account, what would happen to schools? You see that, in fact, it would change schools probably more radically than any other characteristic that you took into account.

Well, that one was the one I decided to take into account.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz, of the Center for Early Adolescence in North Carolina, talking with Barbara Bernhard of station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

REINHARDT: Her ideas may be too radical for many parents and educators. Schools sure would be different if kids could move around when they wanted to.

MERROW: Change, at least in Bloomington, Indiana, didn't come about because of anybody's new ideas. There, the spark for changing from junior high schools to middle schools came, literally, from a fire.

REINHARDT: The old junior high burned down.

MERROW: Margaret Joseph reports.

CHANGE IN BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

JOSEPH: We learned from Superintendent Ronald Walton that in 1970, a fire that destroyed one of the junior high buildings is what initiated the change to middle schools.

WALTON: After having this disaster in the school system, of losing a building by fire, we felt that rather than just go out and replace that building, that we really ought to look at our curriculum and our total pattern of organization for instructional purposes. We looked at research; we looked at what we knew about the way children learn; we looked at prevailing trends across the

country, and experiences that other districts were having at that time with middle school organization as opposed to the junior high school pattern. We also, of course, tried to identify the goals and objectives of this school district. And based on all of that, it was a consensus of people involved in that study that we had a real opportunity -- since we were going to have to build some new facilities anyway to replace this building -- it was the consensus that we move to a K-5, 6-8, 9-12 pattern of organization.

JOSEPH: Essentially, that means that grade school ended at grade five, and high school began at grade nine. The Monroe County Schools had used the junior high concept for about 15 years when this all came about. Middle school principal Dale Glenn says that the middle school concept was based in part on changes within our society.

GLENN: One of the rationales for beginning the middle schools concept maybe 10 or 15 years ago, was the fact that studies had proven that youngsters were maturing a year earlier than they had a generation or two generations ago, which means, in effect, that a student on a sixth grade level was about as mature as a seventh grader had been 30 or 40 years ago. And there's also a lot of evidence to show that it appears that a sixth grader, a seventh grader, and an eighth grader have much more in common than a seventh. an eighth and a ninth grader.

JOSEPH: Mike Walsh has also taught in junior high schools. He describes the problems he saw ninth graders have in a junior high setting.

WALSH: When they had a junior high school where it was seventh, eighth and ninth grade, I felt, in my own mind, having taught in that kind of a system, that the freshman felt more or less left out too, because usually the high school and the junior high were very closely connected. So the freshman were trying to behave like seniors in a situation where they were earning credits --Carnegie units -- for graduation, and yet, felt that they were part of the little kids. And I think that turned them off.

JOSEPH: Middle school teachers in Indiana will have to be licensed specially for that age group, starting next fall. Previously, like most states, Indiana has licensed elementary and secondary teachers. Walsh, whose group backed the new law, says it'll help the quality of the middle school. No longer will teachers at this level be ones who are just waiting for senior high openings to occur.

WALSH: If you choose middle school licensing, then I think that forces those people to say, "That's where I want to be; that's where the action is." I know that's my feeling, and I think most of the teachers we have around here -- certainly that are veterans -- feel that way; they don't have any desire to say, "Hey, I'll go to high school because it's better; I'm a better teacher if I do."

JOSEPH: Superintendent Walton says that he's sold on the middle school for the Monroe County schools.

WALTON: I have no intention, and I don't get any feedback from teaching staffs or from administrators, or from parents as far as that's concerned, to return to the junior high school pattern.

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MERROW: That report for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION from Margaret Joseph, station WFIU, Bloomington, Indiana.

REINHARDT: In Bloomington, the change seems to be working, and it's been accepted. In Toledo, Ohio, however, suspicious voters rejected the middle school idea at the ballot box. Then, a few years later, the school district asked voters to approve new junior high schools -- which actually were middle schools, but under the old name.

MERROW: Reporter Barbara Glowacki talked with Emery Leverett of the Toledo Public School System.

THE TOLEDO, OHIO INITIATIVE

LEVERETT: So, we came back at a later date, at the request of parents in South Toledo, Central Toledo, and East Toledo, that we look at the middle concept again. But then, when we go on the ballot to go under the name of the junior high, which so many people were familiar with versus the middle school concept: and in that bond issue, monies were voted specifically for building what we consider junior high, but really it was the middle school concept. And they were really those parents who felt that the age difference between sixth graders and seventh graders, that really felt that they should be separated. So then we went for the seventh and eighth grades only.

As our people rejected the middle school concept, you'll find all of the schools surrounding us picked up the concept and voted it. And we were particularly pleased that we gave the leadership, even though we did not get it for ourselves. We feel, probably, that we didn't do our job, to the extent that people knew what we were talking about about a middle school. I remember one mother had the idea that you were going to divide the school into half, and this middle would go here, and this middle would go there, and many missed conceptions as it relates to middle school. And back to your previous question, then we came back with the same idea and used the word "junior high," which the people were familiar with, then they voted the money for the three new junior high schools.

GLOWACKI: Emery Leverett, who's in charge of educating junior high school pupils in Toledo. He says that the four areas of the city that have junior highs like them, because the concentration of large numbers of pupils of the same age means that teachers can be specialists. Pupils have more course offerings to select from, including academically advanced placement classes and skill classes, such as typing, which are not offered in the K-8 buildings. And the athletic and activities' programs are larger and more varied than in the smaller, traditional schools.

Although in Toledo a few K-8 buildings include seventh and eighth graders from two or three K-6 schools, they seem to prefer in their neighborhoods the straight kindergarten through eighth grade schools, and don't want separate junior high schools.

LEVERETT: I would agree that there are those who felt that, "I went to this school; my kids are going, and my grand kids are going."

GLOWACKI: When Washington Township was annexed to the city, residents refused to give up their school system. So, that part of the city has a huge campus, with all of the seventh graders in one building, all the eighth grade in another, the ninth and tenth grades in a third building, and the junior and seniors in a fourth. It's far from an ideal or even desirable situation. But, as the area grew, the system kept adding buildings on the same plot of ground, and that's the way it turned out. Some administrators have said that sometimes school systems are forced into positions because of physical plants, and not because of philosophical decisions.

MERROW: That report for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION from Barbara Glowacki, station WGTE, Toledo, Ohio.

REINHARDT: The situation there, where middle schools were called junior highs to gain acceptance, suggests just how hard it is to get an accurate count of how many of which kind of schools there are.

MERROW: We can tell you, with certainty, that the number of middle schools is increasing rapidly: it's more than doubled since 1970.

REINHARDT: And the number of junior highs has declined slightly over the same

eight years.

MERROW: Here are the figures compiled by the National Center for Educational Statitstics. In 1970, 1500 middle schools -- meaning grades 6, 7 and 8, or, perhaps. grades 5, 6, 7 and 8; at last count in 1976, 4,000 middle schools.

REINHARDT: And for junior highs--which usually mean 7, 8 and 9, but can mean 7 and 8 -- 8,000 in 1970, and 7500 at last count.

MERROW: But the numbers don't reveal the crucial distinction: what goes on inside the school. Middle schools can be organized like high schools, with losts of switching from class to class, varsity sports, and so forth.

REINHARDT: And, junior high schools can be organized into "clusters" or "learning communities," which would be consistent with the middle school philosophy. Tom Looker has a report on the approach taken in Amherst, Massachusetts.

THE AMHERST APPROACH

LOOKER: Last year, a special committee of parents, administrators and teachers considered in-depth the future of Amherst Junior High School; and they decided that many of the educational benefits of middle schools could be achieved without changing the basic junior high structure. A major proposal of the committee was to enlarge an alternative educational program for seventh and eighth graders which has been operating for four years. The program sets up what are called "learning communities." And by next year, some 300 children, half of all seventh and eighth graders, will be in one of three communities.

A "learning community" consists of 100 students, and a team of four teachers, who share four interconnecting classrooms. The curriculum studied is the same as what goes on in the rest of the junior high school, except that the teachers, representing four academic disciplines, collaborate and integrate their course work as much as possible. Teacher Gale Stilphen explains the special interdisciplinary approach in the "learning community."

STILPHEN: We often...two of us will team together to do a project. Like I did a very big research paper in the beginning of the year in animal life. I was doing a unit called animal life. And what I did is, I was responsible totally for the content. Like my class met every day in the library, and all we did was search that out. In English, Rose was responsible for the format: how do you write a paper, you know. And that worked out fantastically. As a science teacher, to have that English support in terms of, you know, writing and knowing the kids well enough to know their strengths and weaknesses. Some people might say, "Well, yeah, it's messier and it's noisier," and yeah, it is. And yet there are many days when each of us might sit and lecture for 45 minutes and expect notes to be taken, and give just as many quizzes, and, you know, read from just as many textbooks.

LOOKER: Students take half their courses within the "learning community." For subjects like foreign languages and physical education, the "learning community" students attend regular junior high school classes. The idea is to bridge the homeroom orientation of an elementary school and the total independence of a high school structure. Parents are encouraged to become involved in many aspects of the "learning community" program.

If all this sounds suspiciously similar to what goes on in middle schools, you're right. "Learning communities" are very much like mini-middle schools. The instructional director at Amherst Junior High, Rod Tulonen.

TULONEN: What I think is happening -- it's probably saving the Amherst taxpayers a lot of money -- is we're setting up, sort of a middle school within the junior high; we're sort of meeting the needs of this age group right within this setting. And I think we're meeting them a lot better than we would in a

traditional 7 through 9 junior high structure.

LOOKER: Do you think what is happening at Amherst is a viable alternative for other junior high schools in the country that recognize the need for reform, but perhaps aren't sure they want to jump into a middle school concept?

TULONEN: Yeah, I think it's a viable option, because it allows you the luxury of exploring for awhile and finding out what works and what doesn't. And also, it allows you the luxury of not committing yourself for large sums of money to building a middle school, and then finding out it doesn't work, or it's not what you wanted.

LOOKER: If more and more parents and students want to participate in the "learning communities," they'll be expanded. The ninth grade, too, is undergoing changes. In the future, it may be tied much more closely to the senior high school.

A picture emerges of Amherst Junior High as a collection of educational alternatives which try to be responsive to the varied needs of early adolescence. But what is it like to have contrasting educational styles, and sometimes contrasting educational philosophies, under the same roof. Gale Stilphen is a science teacher who was one of the originators of the "learning communities" four years ago.

STILPHEN: Sometimes it is hard to have an alternative within an established system, because kids will say, "Well, why do I need a pass to my locker? Can't I just go out there, or can't I go to the bathroom." And you'd like to say, "yes," but it's like having a driver's license; these are the rules of the building. And even though maybe we feel we don't need them, we still have to abide by them. The first couple of years, kids always said, "Oh, 'learning community' kids are noisier, and they're always in the halls," and it was probably true. But, it was true for different reasons.

LOOKER: Do you have friends who are not in the "learning community"?

STUDENT: Yes.

LOOKER: What do they think of your being in the "learning community"? Do they kind of wish they were there too, or...?

STUDENT: No. Some think it's pretty dumb. You know, they just don't know anything, and they think you're stupid if you're in it, or something.

STUDENT: All my friends are saying, "Don't go in the 'learning community, that stinks. They won't let you out if you want to get out; and it's a crummy place to be." And then I looked at my mother, and she goes, "Oh, go in there. They're real nice, and everything." I said I'd try it, and I liked it.

STUDENT: "Learning community," that means you don't know much; that's what they think. I think you learn more than they do.

LOOKER: For OPTIONS IN EDCUATION, I'm Tom Looker in Amherst, Massachusetts.

* * *

CONDUCTOR: All right, let's do it again. One, two, ready, go. (sound of violas playing) Keep going a little bit more. Not bad violas.

REINHARDT: Politics, busing, declining enrollments, a fire, and voter confusion: all played a role in the way schools were organized in the communities we're reporting on.

MERROW: Educational philosophy takes a back seat, or so it seems.

REINHARDT: The winds of change are familiar to educators; they're always

looking for better ways to educate children.

MERROW: And just maybe, educators are quicker than most to grab at straws to look for quick and easy answers to hard problems.

REINHARDT: The Catholic parochial schools, however, are not easily blown about by the winds of change: tradition means more there. And largely for that reason, junior high schools, "learning communities," and middle schools are not often heard of.

MERROW: In the Catholic school system, the typical structure is kindergarten though eighth grade, followed by a four year high school. Rarely are there junior highs, middle schools, or "learning communities."

REINHARDT: Reporter Deborah Hamilton asked Assistant Superintendent Sister Marie Albert, with the archdiocese of Philadelphia, why the Catholic Church doesn't favor junior high schools.

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS AND THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

SISTER ALBERT: I guess a lot of it would have to do with financial reasons, because we didn't have a lot of high schools in the beginning. And then, we would never have been able to have all those separate buildings for a junior high, the way they have in the public school. And it isn't just peculiar to parochial schools, because education was, in the beginning, K through 8. In the early days, it just wasn't peculiar to Catholic schools.

HAMILTON: As waves of immigration enlarged, and public attitudes favored more education for children, public schools added junior and senior highs. But the Catholic system added only senior highs, and has maintained elementary education through eighth grade. Sister Marie Albert of the Philadelphia Parochial School System cites advantages of this system, and says there are no plans for change in spite of some disadvantages.

SISTER ALBERT: We've really never seen any reason to change it, because it's adequately meeting the educational needs of the children.

HAMILTON: Would public schools be better if they organized on the same pattern that the parochial school system is organized?

SISTER ALBERT: I don't think so, because I don't think it's the organization of a school, necessarily, that makes it better. To me, a school is good depending on the quality of the teachers, the instruction that's taking place; and it really doesn't depend upon organization by grade or the size of the building.

REINHARDT: Sister Marie Albert talking with reporter Deborah Hamilton of s[illegible]tion WUHY Philadelphia.

MERROW: But while the church remains the same, the public schools--at least some of them here in Washington, D.C.--are moving back in the direction of the old kindergarten through eighth grade approach.

REINHARDT: One school, the John Eaton Elementary School, has gone full circle. It's now kindergarten through eighth, and has been for five years.

MERROW: Parents abandoned the local junior high school for several reasons. The most important one, according to Eaton's PTA president, was fear of violence.

REINHARDT: Children from Eaton Elementary went to junior high school with students from neighborhoods throughout the city, and they carried home with them stories about racial tension and crime in their new surroundings.

MERROW: According to Eaton's PTA president, it only took a couple of these

stories to change the parents' image of junior high school.

REINHARDT: They thought junior high school would be a gentle transition between grade school and high school. They came to see it as a combat zone.

MERROW: Race is a sensitive issue in the D.C. public schools, and both the parents and the school board prefer to emphasize other reasons for closing a junior high school and keeping seventh and eighth graders in their elementary school.

REINHARDT: It's cheaper to teach everyone, kindergarten through eighth, in one building.

MERROW: And, they say, with declining enrollments in public schools, we should be doubling up students, not spreading them out to several different schools.

REINHARDT: Another justification parents give for the kindergarten through eight school is that adolescents grow up too fast when they spend the day at a junior high school.

MERROW: Debbie Barr is a former junior high teacher who now teaches seventh and eighth grade English at Eaton School. NPR's Natalie Iglitz asked Barr to explain about growing up too fast.

GROWING UP TOO FAST

BARR: Parents are very concerned that kids are getting "into things too early." And I think that this really slows down that process. I know that when I have taught in a junior high or observed junior high and high school, that the kids are getting into drugs, into sex, into social activities much earlier because they have the older kids to emulate. Here, they are the older kids. So I don't have statistics to back me up, but I sense that the socialization, the precocious behavior that you sometimes see in adolescents is somewhat slowed down by having them housed in, you know, K through 8.

IGLITZ: What happens then when they go to high school though? Are they little lost lambs in the world of high school?

BARR: Well, in this case, this is seventh and eighth grade, so they will continue with the ninth grade at a local junior high, so they do have that one year in a regular junior high. And I have spoken to students who have gone on; they have seemed to have made the adjustment successfully, and I have not heard any complaints.

MERROW: Natalie Iglitz asked a group of seventh graders at Eaton School if they had any complaints.

STUDENT: I sort of wish that they had better, like sports' things, and like a different, separate auditorium and gym. Because like now the way we are, like if we want to have gym class, you gotta go in there and move all the chairs, or else you have to go outside.

IGLITZ: Was it your parents, pretty much, who made the decision to come here rather than go to junior high school? Why not go to junior high school?

STUDENT: It's a whole lot better than some of the other schools around here. Like, just some of the things that have been going on in schools lately.

IGLITZ: Like what? What do you mean?

STUDENT: Well, crime, and so on and so forth. It's just...well, we've been doing a lot better here, and we heard some pretty lousy reports about the junior high schools in this area. So I'm just as content to stay here.

STUDENT: I don't think that it's really all that great to be the oldest kids,

because, like our principal, like she's really mean to us cause she's afraid that we're going to do something. And, like, we don't...I'm in the student council. And whenever, like, I go down with the president, who's also in my class, like we go downstairs to the meetings; and she stops us, and she says, "What are you doing; where are you going?" And we say, "Oh, we're in student council." And she doesn't believe us cause she doesn't know it, and she's really strict because she's afraid we're gonna, you know, you're going to smoke or something. or go and play hookey, or something.

IGLITZ: It sounds like they have good reason to believe that because of what's going on in junior high school?

STUDENTS: Um huh.

IGLITZ: They have an image of what seventh and eighth graders are like?

STUDENT: They think 13 and 14, you know, 12 and 13 years are like that in junior highs, they're going to be like that here. It's all the same. They don't...they think...they stereotype 12 and 13-year-olds.

IGLITZ: One reason for having junior high schools is, supposedly, that it helps you prepare a little bit better for going to high school, and helps cushion your progression in school a little bit, so you don't go right from grade school to high school. Would you like to have that cushion, or do you feel like you're going to be just all of a sudden in high school and just a little bit confused?

STUDENT: No matter where I go I'm going to be in some kind of shock when I get into high school. Same thing. Like when I moved from sixth grade up to seventh grade, homework was about twice as much; work was about twice as much; they expected twice as much out of you. You know, I'm getting along with that now. At first it was a bit of a shock. You know, it's going to be the same thing in high school no matter where I go.

* * *

REINHARDT: Seventh graders at Eaton School, speaking with Natalie Iglitz in Washington, D.C.

MERROW: But what's happened at John Eaton School may not be easy to duplicate. Adding seventh and eighth grade to that school did cost more, even though many educators told us that it wouldn't necessarily be more expensive to break away from the junior high school.

REINHARDT: Educators like Joan Lipsitz say we have to break away; that junior high school is just not the right way to educate young adolescents.

EDUCATION OF ADOLESCENTS NEEDS TO BE MORE MEANINGFUL

LIPSITZ: Just like the growth spurt is a characteristic of adolescent development, another characteristic that's very exciting is the growth of the sense of commitment: commitment to one's self; the first time in a person's life that he or she says, "I have a destiny; I have a future." So that some thing that goes on in school has to be meaningful in terms of th t destiny or future. But also, a sense of commitment to society, so that for the first time a person says, "I am a part of a generation." That's really a very exciting... One of the most exciting examples of this that I have heard is a program in Grand Rapids, where a very insightful young woman has taken a group of girls and put together a program that combines leadersnip training for young women. And she's talking about 13, 14, and 15-year-olds when she's doing this. Exactly at the point when they get this sense of commitment, she's giving them leadership training; she's bringing in people who have a calling in something. She's also having them break down sexual stereotypes by doing work out in the community; meaningful responsible work that requires a short-term commitment, which young adolescents are capable of. They are painting the houses of the

elderly in the community. And then, added to that, is weekend camping, which again breaks down a sexual stereotype, but also it creates a community of young women who talk about what they did during the week in this community work, and, again, meet with women who have committed themselves to something. Now, I find this, conceptually, very exciting; and I'm not saying it has to be done with young women. It's something that could be done in many different ways. But the combination of physical activity and bringing out those energies, and utilizing them for the social good -- and young people want to do something more than flipping hamburgers in a hamburger joint after school. And being able to say "that is the house that I painted." But, again, not asking somebody to make a long-term commitment, allowing them to be as changeable as they need to be, as part of their development, and to explore a lot of different ways of expressing that sense of commitment: that, to me, is something that could be built into the schools with ease.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz of the Center for Young Adolescents in North Carolina.

REINHARDT: She would like to see middle schools replace junior high schools.

LIPSITZ: You have this age group, then, looking for commitment, you know, seeking out--"how can I be an individual and be a part of a group"--in a holding pattern where nobody really in the society can articulate what the meaning of this institution is, what its purposes are, what its goals are, except to get the kids on into high school and to keep them from dropping out, and to keep a certain level of order, to give them perhaps some basic skills, a smattering of culture here and there. It's just a hodge podge for them. The ninth graders seem to do better in the senior high schools. The sixth graders in elementary school are already quite old. This is one of the reasons that the middle school movement appears to make some sense; that if you do have to segment into three segments of elementary, middle and senior, then taking it down some -- like sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade; or at least seventh and eighth, but allowing ninth to go up -- makes some sense. But elementary school teachers will tell you that there's a distinct difference in the sixth graders; that they really are ready; they're racing, they're raring to go; and they could really do that if they weren't so terrified when they got into junior high school. It's a terrible lack of fit between what their needs are and what we're doing to them.

MERROW: Dr. Joan Lipsitz of the Center for Young Adolescents, talking with reporter Barbara Bernhard, station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

REINHARDT: We've been told it's not what's right that determines what eventually happens; it's politics, economics and circumstance.

MERROW: The other thing we keep hearing is that with declining enrollments and school closings, right now is a very good time for citizens to get involved in their schools, to find out what direction things are moving.

REINHARDT: And maybe change them.

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SIXTH GRADERS TALK ABOUT JUNIOR HIGH

MERROW: Well, aren't you a little scared about junior high school? There's a lot of bigger kids. You're the big kids this year.

STUDENT: Well, I don't know. It just seems like it's going to be a lot harder: a new schedule and everything. It's going to be a lot to adjust to.

MERROW: What do you think will be the biggest difference between sixth grade and seventh grade?

STUDENT: Probably (laughs)...I've no idea. Everything is so different.

STUDENT: Just everything.

STUDENT: Switching classes, probably.

MERROW: What do you mean?

STUDENT: You switch classes every...you never have the same teacher for each period.

STUDENT: Well, it's going to be different, because it's new, and because of the lockers and all, and, you know, walking the halls and everything. But I'm not worrying about it too much.

MERROW: Are you worried about that time with the big kids, the eighth graders?

STUDENT: No, not really. I think...if...as long as you're not worried about 'em, and you don't show that your scared of 'em, I don't think they'll botner you.

STUDENT: It's going to be a lot easier to make friends there, because you have a lot more classes, and there's only two different size of grades that you have.

MERROW: Seventh and eighth.

STUDENT: Yeah. And, well, here, we have first through sixth, and we...well, with the center class, we only get to mix in with about three classes. And, like, it seems like it's a lot more school time, because you hardly have any time to know anybody.

MERROW: In junior high school you think you'll have more time for social life?

STUDENT: Um huh. Yes. A lot. I mean, we'll...I'm not exactly the most socialist person in the world, but I think I could get a few more friends than I do now.

REINHARDT: Last week, on Part I of this look at junior high schools, we reported on Murchison Junior High School in Austin, Texas. You can get the transcripts of both programs for $1.00. You can get the two cassettes for $10.00. And, free for the asking, you can have our schedule for the next three months.

MERROW: Here's our address: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C. 20036.

REINHARDT: Here's that information again: two transcripts -- $1.00 in all; the cassettes -- $10.00 in all; the schedule is free. Ask for Programs 116 and 117, "Junior High Schools."

MERROW: And our address again: National Public Radio -- Education, Washington, D.C. 20036.

REINHARDT: Please tell us the call letters of your local NPR station.

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MERROW: Material for this program came in part from Barbara Bernhard, station WUNC, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Cathy Lewis, WXXI, Rochester, New York; Deborah Hamilton, WUHY, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Margaret Joseph, WFIU, Bloomington, Indiana; Barbara Glowacki, WGTE, Toledo, Ohio; Tom Looker in Amherst, Massachusetts; and Anna Sklar, Los Angeles, California.

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REINHARDT: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is written and produced by John Merrow. The Associate Producer is Katharine Ferguson; the Assistant Producer is Natalie Iglitz. Technical assistance for this program by Robert Knock and John Widoff. I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

* * *

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this is NPR -- National Public Radio.

* * *

MUSIC CREDIT: Toledo Junior High School Song, sung by students at the school.

Theme from the television series "Happy Days," sung by students at Murchison Junior High School, Austin, Texas.

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